

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
**RECEPTION FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GUARDIANSHIP
AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
BI-ANNUAL MEETING**

Government House, Darwin

22 April 2008

As the Administrator of the Northern Territory, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Government House today.

Of all the characters in literature who had a problem with guardians and guardianship, King Lear would have to take the cake. He had three daughters: Goneril, Regan and Cordelia and as he was losing grip on public affairs, he decided to bestow the kingdom on them.

But first he asks of them a question:

*Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state –
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend.*

Goneril, the eldest, answers first:

*Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter; etc, etc
Beyond all manner of so much I love you,*

Regan begins:

*I am made of that self metal as my sister,
And prize me at her worth.
Only she comes too short, that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys
Which the most precious square of sense possesses, etc, etc
Each is given huge estates and then it is Cordelia's turn.*

Lear says:

*Now, our joy, although our last and least;
To whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interest'd; what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.*

Cordelia: *Nothing, my lord*

Lear: *Nothing*

Cordelia: *Nothing*

Lear: *Nothing comes of nothing*

So Cordelia is cruelly cast out with no dower but truth and poor Lear is left to the mercy of the wicked sisters.

Do we have an echo here of the tale of Cinderella and other stories of ancient lineage? We know that Shakespeare wrote King Lear at least 400 years ago and it is supposed that he was excited to the passion in the play by the true story of elderly courtier Sir Bryan Annesley, who was declared insane by an elder daughter, Lady Wildgose, while his youngest daughter petitioned King James VI (of Scotland) and I of England for the restitution of the estate. What seems eerie is that the name of this youngest daughter was Cordell.

But I digress. My point in going to Shakespeare, apart from the fact that it is his birthday tomorrow, is to point out that the very issues you are confronted with in guardianship are by no means new. Lear himself says to Regan: *I gave you allmade you my guardians, my depositaries*. And he came to a pitiful end, turned mad naked in a storm. Yet he died with a kind of innocence that he would be reunited with his Cordelia, now lying dead in his arms.

He could have done with the protective ministrations of your Australian Guardianship and Administration Committee which, I note, was first established in 1993 as a national forum for State and Territory agencies.

Public Advocates and Public and Adult Guardians seek to protect persons with a decision-making disability from abuse, neglect or exploitation; Public and State Trustees can manage their financial and legal affairs; Boards and Tribunals, and in the Northern Territory the Courts, have power to appoint guardians or administrators to make decisions in their best interests.

Your meeting over the next two days will offer areas of interest to members from all jurisdictions. The Committee's main functions include developing consistency, uniformity and a collaborative focus; encouraging research; providing advice to government in respect to significant issues and trends; and encouraging dialogue at a national level, and across relevant jurisdictions that enhances quality decision-making.

One of the unique features of providing guardianship and administration here in the Territory is that 60 to 70% of recipients are indigenous. This, together with the richly multicultural nature of the Northern Territory provides staff working in this area many opportunities to work in a wonderfully culturally diverse environment.

I understand that this is the first visit to the Northern Territory for a number of your representatives and also the first AGAC meeting for some new members. I hope that not only will you enjoy the opportunity to network but also a memorable Darwin experience.

Well done to the organisers for arranging everything for this wonderful time of year: The famous Mindil Markets reopen on Thursday for the dry season and you will no doubt witness one of our spectacular sunsets over the harbour either at Mindil Beach or on your mid-week cruise.

On Friday, it is sunrise that will be a special time, following the ANZAC Day Dawn Service at The Cenotaph on the Esplanade. A large crowd congregates and the service is particularly meaningful due to the many campaigns which involved Territorians in the past and the substantial presence of armed forces currently stationed here in the Top End.

In Government House, we also remember one of the domestic staff who, during the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942, was killed only a few metres away in the grounds where the Administrator's Office used to stand.

You have a wealth of experiences before you and a wealth of knowledge to share. I therefore wish you all the best for your Bi-annual Meeting. Returning to King Lear, in Act 5 Lear and Cordelia are reconciled and when Cordelia suggests they confront Goneril and Regan, Lear says:

*No, no, no, no!We'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;
And take upon's the mystery of things...*